



# Sports Diplomacy



The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), with legislative authority under the Fulbright Hays Act, and as a part of its Partnership for Learning Initiative, has an International Sports Initiative designed to help young people discover how success in athletics can help give them the self-confidence and skills they need to achieve in life. Through sports exchanges we hope to reach out to youth around the world with a message of America's commitment to international understanding, cultural tolerance and mutual respect.

## Public-Private Partnerships Benefit Filipino Youth

The Detlef Schrempf Foundation, through an ECA grant, held a successful sports exchange with the Philippines (2003–2004). Former NBA star Detlef Schrempf and 9 other Americans conducted basketball clinics in the Philippines for coaches, and skills camps for boys and girls, ages 7 to 18.

Through corporate partners they multiplied the impact of the exchange. Each of the 500 youth campers received a basketball jersey from Adidas, a basketball from Shell Oil, and lunch from Snickers and Powerade. The Americans also visited community orphanages and distributed toys, books, and games donated by Amazon.com.

## Including Athletes with Disabilities in Sports Programs

In collaboration with the national Paralympic Committees, ECA brought 14 young athletes and coaches from Turkey, Jordan and Morocco to the U.S. as part of a Georgia State University (GSU) workshop, which focused on including individuals with disabilities in sports programs. The exchange included participation at BlazeCamp International Sports Camp at Roosevelt Warm Springs Rehabilitation Institute in Atlanta, GA.

In spring 2003, GSU also coordinated the African Academy of Disability Sport, an international project to support sport and recreation development for youth with disabilities in Africa.



## Helping Iraq Re-enter the International Sports Community

In 2003, ECA launched a series of sports initiatives in partnership with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC). The first sports initiative with Iraq developed a sports exchange for athletes and coaches from Iraq's National Archery Federation. The group competed in the Olympic qualifying World Archery Championships in New York City (July 2003), and then trained at the USOC archery training facility in Chula Vista, CA. The latest exchange brought Iraqi athletes and coaches to participate in the Titan Games in Atlanta, GA, and train at the U.S. Olympic training center in Colorado Springs, CO, to prepare for the 2004 Olympics in Athens and the 2004 Arab Games in Algeria. At the Titan Games the Iraqis competed against 200 athletes from 11 countries in boxing, wrestling, and Paralympic fencing (wheelchair). As part of their exchange experience, they watched the Olympic torch—on its global relay to Athens—enter Centennial Park in Atlanta and light the Olympic flame.

One of the participants, 24-year-old wrestler Ahamad Weali tells the story of when an Iraqi wrestler defected at the 2000 Arab Games in Syria, "They called us all together after our return and told us that we would receive awards from Uday. We were taken to the prison where all of our hair was shaved off and we were beaten..." About his current experience Weali said, "It is totally different now. We can feel we are real athletes. The age of fear for ourselves and our families is over. We feel free."



Iraqi archers attend Baltimore Orioles game at Camden Yards in 2003.

*"The memory that will stay engraved in us is that peace between peoples is the key answer. Regardless of what happens, the only way to get that [peace] is through activities of this sort, sports activities."*

—Captain of the Iraqi archery team



Disabled athletes attend BlazeCamp in Atlanta, GA in 2004.

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